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ABSTRACT

Noting that it is vital to pay careful attention to designing the reading curriculum, this document outlines the following issues: objectives in reading curriculum; learning activities; methods of teaching; assessment of student achievement; supervision in the reading curriculum; and philosophy of evaluation. Questions which arise pertaining to objectives include the following: (1) should objectives be stated in terms of performance goals or general objectives; (2) should there be a balance among knowledge, skills, and objectives; and (3) who should sequence the objectives. Learning activities can be formal and direct or can include student choice and interaction. Methods of teaching used must meet personal needs of pupils. A critical task of the classroom teacher is to be a good evaluator. In addition, a reading supervisor should work continually to help classroom teachers update their teaching skills. (PM)

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An Outline of Issues/Design in the Reading Curriculum

by Marlow Ediger

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AN OUTLINE OF ISSUES/DESIGN IN THE READING CURRICULUM

It is vital to pay careful attention to designing the reading curriculum. The design provides the framework for the teacher in the instructional arena. There is a structure when paying much attention to designing he curriculum in reading. This structure provides parents, school administrators, and pupils the essentials of what needs to go into a quality reading curriculum. The design should be of major significance to all interested in developing good readers. Within a carefully developed design, there are issues which need identification and attempts made at resolution.

Objectives in the Curriculum

Which objectives should pupils attain in reading instruction? There are a plethora of possible ends for pupil attainment. Questions which arise pertaining to objectives include the following:

* should the objectives be stated in terms of being performance goals, measurably stated objectives, or general objectives?
* should there be balance among knowledge, skills, and attitudinal objectives, or should one kind of objective receive preference over the others?
* who should sequence objectives -- the teacher, the pupil(s), pupils with teacher guidance, or a combination of individuals?

Learning Activities

There are learning activities which are more formal and direct as compared to others. Thus, an issue in reading pertains to how tightly knit a learning activity should be in terms of rigidity. Toward the other end of the continuum is how open ended the activity is for pupil choice and interaction. Which learning activities should then be chosen for pupils to achieve the desired ends?

* basal textbooks, workbooks, library books, and other types of print discourse.
* visual aids including illustrations, study prints, pictures, drawings.
* audio visual aids including video disks, video tapes, films, filmstrips, slides.
* audio tapes including radio, cassette recordings, book reports.

* pupil constructed items including dioramas, models, murals, bulletin board displays, games.
* dramatizations including informal, formal, socio-dramas, dramatic play.
* teacher directed experiences including discussions, panel reports, debates.
* computerized instruction including tutorial, diagnosis and remediation, simulation, drill and practice.
* chalkboard and overhead projector use in teaching reading (Ediger and Rao, 2003).

Methods of Teaching

The teacher must be an effective evaluator of pupil achievement to notice under which methods of teaching a pupil does best. Thus, the teacher needs to have much knowledge about each pupil in terms of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. A good teacher then notices where a pupil is achieving presently and provides the learner with learning opportunities to promote sequential progress. An issue then in determining which methods of teaching to use in the classroom pertains to direct versus indirect means in teaching and learning situations. Which methods of teaching should then be used in reading instruction?

* teacher use of the basal reader manual in determining objectives, learning activities, and appraisal procedures.
* lecture, deduction, induction, pupil selection of objectives, teacher/pupil planning of the curriculum,
* peer teaching, peer mediated instruction, interactive peer learning, debates, pupil lead discussions, individualized reading, sustained silent reading, excursions, reciprocal teaching and learning, problem solving approaches, project methods, and experience charts,
* programmed reading, individually guided education (IGE), teacher guided reading instruction, Big Book approaches used in teaching, linguistic procedures (Charles Fries and Leonard Bloomfield), Reading Recovery, Success for All (Robert Slavin), Distar, Stimulus/Response theory of learning.
* Learning Styles Theory (Dunn and Dunn, 1979), Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner, 1993).

Methods of teaching used must meet personal needs of pupils. Each pupil needs to achieve as well as possible in reading instruction.

Assessment of Pupil Achievement

A quality program of assessment of pupil achievement needs to be in evidence. The evaluation must determine how well pupils are doing in reading as well as provide feedback on which areas the learner needs to improve upon to become s better reader. Assessment procedures need to be valid and reliable. Both formal and informal methods of assessment need to be used. Informal methods include

* teacher observation, rating scales, check lists, teacher and pupil journal writing, pupil self evaluation, anecdotal records, paper pencil test items written by the teacher (true/false, essay, matching, multiple choice, short answer and completion), pupil developed portfolios,
* evaluation of pupil products and processes, such as art projects, construction items, creative and formal dramatizations, discussion groups, committees at work, written work, oral presentations by pupils evaluated in terms of desired criteria.

A salient and critical task of the classroom teacher is to be a good evaluator. Based on evaluation of each pupil's achievement, the teacher may then remedy pupil deficiencies and provide for sequential progress. Popham (2003) suggests teachers ask themselves the following questions when developing classroom evaluation devices:

* Do my classroom assessments measure genuinely worthwhile skills and knowledge?
* Will I be able to promote my student's mastery of what's measured in my classroom assessment?
* Can I describe what skills and knowledge my classroom tests measure in language sufficiently clear for my own instructional planning?
* Do my classroom assessments yield results that allow me to tell which parts of my instruction were effective or ineffective?
* Do my classroom tests take up too much time away from my instruction?

Summative evaluation include the following tests to ascertain learner progress:

* state and district mandated tests, standardized tests, and criterion tests used as formal evaluation devices
* personality tests, readiness tests.

There are salient principles of assessment which are important to use when designing evaluative devices to ascertain pupil achievement. These include the following:

* use assessment is an integral part of curriculum and instruction.
* devote time to essential learnings. * set high standards for teaching and learning
* clarify targets early (pupils should understand what they are to know and do if they achieve the objective).
* aim for more authentic assessments (assessments should be geared to finding out student's ability to apply knowledge and skills successfully in meaningful tasks).
* collect multiple indicators of learning -- an array of evidence (Parker, 2001).

Supervision in the Reading Curriculum

The reading supervisor should work continually in the direction of having classroom teachers update their teaching skills. There are a multiplicity of demands placed upon the reading supervisor to assist teachers to guide pupils to achieve optimally. The following are ways to aide teachers to do a good job of teaching; thus the reading supervisor may help

1. children who are discipline problems in the classroom to have their energies channeled in a positive direction to improve reading skills and attitudes. Assisting teachers in reading and implementing research results on disciplining pupils may help redirect energy channels of learners.
2. classroom teachers by being a good listener to the formers' teaching of reading problems, by assisting with diagnosis and remediation of pupil difficulties.
3. by being approachable. Teachers then might realize they can go to the supervisor with problems in reading instruction.
4. classroom teachers to have high, but reasonable, expectations for pupils in reading. Pupil expectations to achieve can be raised by the regular teacher as well as by the supervisor.
5. in developing inservice programs in reading instruction for teachers. He/she determines what assistance teachers and pupils need to use phonics and to comprehend reading subject matter (Ediger and Rao (200).

Philosophy of Evaluation

Measurement Driven Instruction (MDI) advocates believe in

teachers setting predetermined objectives for pupils to achieve. These objectives are

* highly specific and their meaning is clear to all involved in their use in teaching.
* specific in that a pupil has/has not achieved each objective as a result of instruction.
* sequentially arranged, starting with the easiest and gradually moving toward those increasingly more complex.
* aligned with the related learning activities. Thus, the learning activities assist pupils to attain the desired objectives.
* written so that teachers receive feedback on each pupil's achievement from having taken the test.

As compared to MDI, problem solving instruction emphasizes pupils identifying problems, contextually, within ongoing units of study. Once a problem has been clearly identified, then viable answers need to be sought. Answers are tentative and subject to revision. Each possible answer needs to be evaluated with study and thought. Modifications and corrections might then well be made.

Problem solving does not stress predetermined objectives for pupils to use in studying reading. Rather, pupils identify problems within a given situation or contextually. The pupil owns the problem. The teacher is there to assist, help, and encourage.

Pupils individually do learn under different conditions and situations (Dunn and Dunn, 1979).

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